DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 531 CS 508 761

AUTHOR Horn, Gary
TITLE Why Are Programs Leaving CEDA?
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (80th, New Orleans, LA, November 19-22, 1994).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Faculty; Communication Problems; *Debate; *Debate Format; Higher Education; National Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS Administrator Surveys; *Cross Examination Debate Association; Debate Coaches; *Debate Delivery; Debate Ethics; National Educational Debate Association

ABSTRACT

A survey of all 38 current members of the (newly formed) National Educational Debate Association investigated why these directors opted to drop their Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) programs. Responses were received from 20 directors. The use of excessive speed in CEDA debate was mentioned as a reason for leaving CEDA by more of the respondents than any other single issue. The use of "squirrel" cases was another reason given. Several respondents felt they had experienced disenfranchisement from CEDA, and were concerned that a real entry level for new programs does not exist. Another reason mentioned was the disrespect CEDA debaters show for each other, the judge, and debate itself. A final factor was the perception that CEDA is becoming a closed system for the initiated only. (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 377 531

"WHY ARE PROGRAMS LEAVING CEDA?"

GARY HORN
FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Presented to the
Speech Communication Association
New Orleans, LA

November, 1994

CS508761

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Horn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

On several occasions Jack Howe, the father of CEDA, warned that we must not loose sight of the original objectives of CEDA and the style of debate it was organized to support. Many others have sounded the alarm through the years but to no avail. Now this paper is asking the question, "Why are programs leaving CEDA?"

When this panel was conceived and I agreed to do this paper, I was a CEDA coach with over 15 years in the organization. I have served the CEDA organization in a variety of positions including being President, Regional Representative on several occasions, and I have served on several committees. Along with many esteemed colleagues, I attended and participated in the 20th Anniversary Assessment Conference in St. Paul. I became a founding member of the National Educational Debate Association on April 22, 1994. At that same time, I dropped my CEDA program.

In this paper, I will present several reasons why a certain group of directors are opting to drop their CEDA programs. The reasons and examples presented in this paper are limited to responses that I received from a request I mailed to all 38 members of the (newly formed) National Educational Debate Association. The request was simply to write down the reasons why you no longer participate in CEDA debate. Out of the 38 requests, 20 directors took the time and effort to respond. I guaranteed that all responses would be kept confidential. A few of the respondents mentioned that confidentiality was not important and that they would be glad to go on record supporting their statements . One coach explained that he came "out of the closet" with his beliefs several years ago and was comfortable with other coaches knowing his coaching philosophy.

DELIVERY

The use of excessive speed in CEDA debate was mentioned as a reason for leaving CEDA by more of the respondents than any other single issue. One coach wrote, "The actual educational advantages of "speed debate" are, in my opinion, negligible. Only a highly specialized, incestuous industry could ever reward the skills taught in CEDA debate, and I

speak with a clear understanding of politics and law as career fields." Another lawyer/debate coach mentioned that if he used the kind of speed he has heard in CEDA debate rounds in the courtroom, the judge and the jury would intervene immediately. He went on to say that he could not think of a profession where the kind of speed used in CEDA would be an asset.

Rapid delivery and the way it fits into the real world was another area that several coaches reported. One respondent noted, "The main reason that I no longer participate in CEDA debate is because it does not help my students learn and practice communication skills that will be of any advantage in the real world." This same coach gets more specific about speed when she continues, "The fast-paced delivery is detrimental to students. They need to practice good speech delivery that will be accepted in real life situations." Another coach added, "Until delivery/communication practice in rounds reflects the sort of theory we teach in our speech classes, there will be serious disaffection with intercollegiate debate. This problem has been chronic." When I think about this statement I realize that it is a strong plea for us to reward debate presentations like we do speeches in our public speaking or persusaive speaking classes. I do not know of a coach in any form of debate that would allow or encourage students to speak rapidly in their speech classes. Why then do many coaches insist on it in debate rounds?

In my own program, I am making attempts to look at the debate tournament as an extension of the classroom and a laboratory for the students to gain more hands-on experience. The students, who went through this change, tell me it is a change for the better. Finally, on speed delivery, I would like to conclude with a comment from a coach that summarized the feelings of most respondents when she wrote:

> "I no longer participate in CEDA because I felt that coaches were using the contact to further their own goals rather than teach speaking skills to students... We could no longer be assured that the judging and competition were on a level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

that allowed students to hone their persuasive speaking skills. Instead, the rewards were more frequently given to teams that "fooled" the opposition with trick cases or rapid fire delivery that was difficult and often impossible to hear or respond to."

SQUIRREL CASES

The use of squirrel cases was another area that appeared to be important to the individuals that responded to my request. Squirrel cases are not new to the debate activity and just keep creating problems for debaters and coaches. Many former CEDA coaches will tell you that one reason they left NDT was because of the squirrel cases. Now CEDA coaches are leaving CEDA because of the same fur bearing animal. One respondent clearly states his feelings about squirrel cases when he explains:

> "A function of academic debate is to seriously discuss a topic area. But another chronic problem in academic debate is the ubiquitous of squirrel cases. I admit I share blame here. But teaching students to approach issues seriously and to argue ethically means that we have some responsibility not to run squirrel cases whose major purpose is to "win at any cost."

Another coach mentions concern for the extent that some cases go completely off the wall and out of the boundaries of the topic. This concern becomes real when you consider the example provided when she wrote the following:

> "In some instances, I felt that teams were creating cases that were insensitive to the judge and the opposition. For example, on one topic session, a team ran a case that discussed female genital mutilation. I think that any reasonable coach who has knowledge of recent topics in CEDA would have difficulty placing the topic that this case discussed.... Why? because it was intended to be off the center of the topic and difficult to discuss for various reasons. It was out of the norm of sensitivity for female opponents and judges and for Christian college students. I found this behavior degrading to me and my students and I had a great deal of difficulty pointing out any value of such a case to new debaters. In real life the bizarre does not rule--it is simply bizarre and remains on the fringe of society. In CEDA it becomes the norm."

Squirrel cases have been detrimental to debate during the 30 years I have coached. I know coaches who defend them and others that just let their students run them without the knowledge of the coach. One coach I talked with last year, told me how he would not

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

tolerate squirrel cases, and then I walked into a round to judge his team with the squirrel of all squirrels. I honestly do not think the coach knew that his team was running that case. He does now, if he read my ballot.

From the responses I received on squirrel cases, we can conclude that the groups I polled considers the squirrel cases harmful to the activity. This brings up the question "Can it be eradicated?" I don't think so, but I do think it can be controlled much better than it is at the present.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Several respondents felt they had experienced disenfranchisement from CEDA. They were concerned that a real entry level for new programs does not exist. One coach mentioned that a mentoring system would have been most helpful. He dropped out of CEDA after three tournaments feeling CEDA could care less.

Another respondent described his first experience with debate and CEDA after a 25 year career in private industry. He wrote:

> "I took my team to two tournaments last spring and for lack of a better word was appalled by what I heard and saw: unintelligible constructives (also rebuttals for that matter), negatives who simply refused to debate the affirmative cases presented, no clear idea of how to conduct a humane cross-examination and students dressed more for the MOSH PIT at the Pearl Jam Concert than for a weekend of competitive, intercollegiate debate."
>
> Since the president of the college is primarily responsible for reinstituting debate...and a former debater himself, he has taken an active interest in our program. I would hesitate to invite him to a CEDA or NDT round of what I have begun to describe as "gag and spit" debate. I think there would (and should) be real questions about the academic decline of debate and the obvious emphasis on winning that seems to have overrun the activity.

The impact of the CEDA experience on this coach and his program could have been catastrophic and ended this new debate program before it really got started. Many of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

us have had similar experiences on occasion and then we searched out "safe places" in CEDA to take our students in order to protect our programs. The "safe places" appear to be more difficult to find each year and many are looking for other alternatives.

Another coach responded that he had spent 15 years out of the country and just returned to the U.S. this past summer. He took a job as Director of Forensics and attended a CEDA tournament earlier this year and was surprised at what he found. He could hardly recognize it as debate. He wrote "I took my team to a CEDA tournament and I was totally horrified. It was not at all what I knew as debate. It was rude, crude, and worst of all non-communicative." Both programs cited are new programs being reactivated after many years. It appears to me that CEDA needs to provide some help for programs that are trying to get off the ground. It might be a good job for the Regional Representative in CEDA. It might even be important enough to establish a committee on the national level to provide a "how-to" packet for new directors. If my memory serves me correctly, in the past CEDA had a very active mentoring program that could be reactivated.

RESPECT

Respect, or lack of, is the area I was not looking forward to considering and thought of all kinds of ways to ignore it. Since it was mentioned on several responses as a reason for leaving CEDA, I feel obligated to discuss it. If you had told me over the 30 years I have coached debate that respect would ever be a question in the debate community, my reaction would have been to laugh. It never entered my mind until the last three years that CEDA had a problem in the area of respect. One coach gave disrespect as his main reason for leaving CEDA. He wrote "I no longer participate in CEDA because of the disrespect CEDA debaters show for each other, the judge, and debate itself."

Another respondent supported this point when he listed as one reason he left CEDA debate was "A lack of civil behavior and respect demonstrated by student

competitors toward their colleagues and toward judges." Some respondents did not use the words respect or behavior, but instead mentioned them in other terms. One coach gives us an example when she wrote:

> "My second major problem with CEDA debate is the egotistical attitudes and aggressive style that I have witnessed in CEDA debate made for the practice of poor interpersonal skills. Students learn to be super competitive instead of cooperative. Many CEDA debaters I have met are quick to argue, have problems really listening to the views of others, and exhibit superior attitudes which only create defensiveness in interpersonal communications situations. None of these learned traits will benefit students in their futures."

In the responses I received, I have several more excellent examples of respect or behavior problems. I think we have supplied enough examples to establish the problems. I do not know the answer to the problem, but I can tell you with some certainty that if I ever discover one of my debaters showing disrespect for other debaters or judges, it will be the last time while a member of my squad.

CLOSED SYSTEM

The closed system idea was presented to me in a response from David K. Scott of Northeastern Oklahoma University. I am using David's name with his permission. He stated:

> "Proof of a "closed" system is an analysis of a "system" and external/environmental variable that exist outside of it. It has been argued by some system theorists that a completely "closed" system is destined to extinction or at least a level of dysfunctionallity. I contend that CEDA is in the process of "sealing" itself off from the world. One can speculate on what that portends. One way to test for a closed system would be to administer a questionnaire to the practitioners of CEDA. I would submit these questions:
>
> 1. Would you want to let your university president or donating alumni watch "championship" CEDA rounds?
> 2. Can students from an argumentation class, but without debate experience in high school or college, be competitive in CEDA?
> 3. Do you object to Ph.D. faculty, with no debate experience judging your debate rounds?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Do you object to "real" policy makers, (i.e., local businessmen or civil servant) judging debate rounds?

David offers us much to think about and attempt to understand. What he says makes sense and I would like to know more about the system theory. The questions that he poses as a test of the system really hit home to me. They make you ask questions about your own program and CEDA debate. Coming from someone so new at CEDA should serve as a "wake-up" call for the CEDA organization.

Several other respondents noted that they were tired of hiding their activity from administration, alumni, colleagues and students. Another coach wrote, "Debate should be relevant to the outside world; therefore, non-debaters should be able to understand and appreciate what our students do.... Random and community judging is necessary if debate is to remain an open system."

NDT to CEDA to ????

Jack Starr, from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, went back to his departure from NDT to explain his reasons for living CEDA. He stated:

> "The year was 1978 and the circuit was NDT. NDT lost schools in drastic numbers, some grasped at the fledgling CEDA circuit and others decided to drop debate altogether. Where is the correlation to why schools are now leaving CEDA? To someone who has lived to see this cycle sadly play out twice, it is very clear. In its growth to the "big circuit", CEDA has forsaken the communicative philosophy that justified its creation and our support. It's practitioners now exemplify every abuse that drove students and schools away from NDT. They even manifest the same arrogance that somehow their unintelligible distortion of language and logic is the highest form of the debater's art. A computer will move data faster and you will get less "garbage out." If you want to play a game, try one you could put on public display rather than only engage in behind closed doors among the initiated. Why leave CEDA? I can not even double-think myself into finding a reason to stay."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We can conclude that the group of people I surveyed feel that fast-delivery, squirrel cases, disenfranchisement of new programs, disrespect, and becoming a closed

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

system are all reasons for leaving CEDA. The questions David Scott poses has to make us think about the kinds of programs we are supporting. The Jack Starr response on NDT-CEDA makes you wonder have we been here before?